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THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

241 *Dhusir jâki wâykom sângo* — We will come to press the grain into the bin.
539 *Miya wây n dy jâkiorom sângo.* — Before you came we had pressed the grain.

III. The Muria's Year

221 It is very difficult to give any sort of general time-table, for events vary
196 in their incidence and in their order from place to place and from year to year. Everything depends on the orders of the Gaita and Siraha, and dreams, economic factors and 'inspirations' combine to disturb the course of events. However, the following table may be taken as giving a rough picture of a normal year:

January .. Bhimul Pandum, the festival of the rain-god. Pupul Korta Tindana and Pen Karsita, the New Eating Festival of pulses, also known as Jata Pandum. Chelik go from village to village dancing the Pus Kolang or Chherta. The people reap the til oil-seed.

February .. Kare Pandum, after which the people may cut grass, bamboos and may begin felling trees for their *dippa* and *parka* clearings. The chelik begin collecting wood and grass for the ghotul. The Marhai festivals, great semi-religious commercial fairs, begin now and continue in various places until April.

March .. Irpu Pandum, the festival of the mahua tree, Marka Pandum, the festival of the new mangoes, and Til Khani, the festival of oil-seed, are held about this time. The marriage season begins and continues until May. Boys and girls go out dancing the Chait and Mahua Dandar. The people are busy collecting mahua flowers, tendu leaves and wood.

April .. Wijja Pandum, the seed festival, preceded by a ceremonial hunt. Ceremonies to purify and protect the villages. People begin breaking myrabolams. Hot weather begins. Many marriages everywhere.

May .. Timber spread over *parka* clearings. Local ceremonies to ensure a good harvest and rainfall.

June .. Timber in clearings fired. Rains begin. Ploughing and sowing. Fencing of gardens and repairs to houses, thatching and protection against rain.

July .. Amawas or Hareli festival. Chelik make stilts.

August .. Heavy rain during the month. Tur Korta Tindana or Kurum Pandum, when the first millets are eaten.

September Rains are clearing. At the end of the month is the Korta Pandum, the first eating of the new rice, cucumbers and gourds. On the day after this festival, the chelik break their stilts and pile them on the stone of Dito or Bhimul Pen.

October .. Cheru or Nuka Nordana Pandum, before which the new rice must not be washed. The Dassera festival attracts thousands to Jagdalpur and Bara Dongar, and is celebrated in a few ghotul. Diwali comes a little later:

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the Muria do not illuminate their houses for it, but tie ears of grain in long strings over their doors. Road work begins, and everybody is busy reaping.

November.. A busy month in the fields. Since September the ghotul have been almost deserted by the chelik, who spend their time in little huts watching the crops. Reaping, thrashing, winnowing and storing grain occupies everyone. From the end of October the motiari have been going out dancing the Diwali and, where this practice is unknown, boys and girls go together for the Hulki dances.

December.. In some villages the Jata Pandum is held in this month. People cut their sarson crops and store them. They collect myrabolams till the end of January.

IV. Cultivation and the Ghotul

883 241 At Padbera and a number of villages in the neighbourhood of Antagarh the ghotul has its own property. The villagers give the chelik a piece of land for cultivation which is known as *chelik-parka*. The boys bring the wood from the neighbouring forest, spread it on the field, burn it and sow the seed. The girls see to the weeding and when the crop is ready all join in the harvest. The girls husk the rice in the ghotul itself and when it is ready give a feast to the village. The following day they offer an egg, red and black powder and liquor to the Kanyang and Rau of the field for the protection of the ghotul.

The chelik and motiari sometimes go to work as a ghotul. Should a party of visitors arrive from another village for a dance and there is no food or liquor for their entertainment, the boys approach one of the wealthier villagers (who of course may have several of his own children in the ghotul) and ask him to advance them rice and pulse, some liquor and a pig, promising they will go to work for him when he needs help in weeding his fields, gathering his harvest or mending a broken embankment. At other times villagers who are in urgent need of help employ the ghotul children and pay them with gifts of grain and pulse. I am told that money is rarely given. Sometimes the boys and girls only receive their food, though this food at least in the evening must be good and should include pork and liquor. When the children receive gifts of grain they save it up, storing it in the house of the leader, till there is enough for a big feast. This is prepared and eaten near the ghotul, or helps to augment the feast at the end of a dancing expedition. The parents are also invited; since the mothers may not go inside the ghotul, the feast is enjoyed outside.

V. The Muria's Food

Kare ahār ta pele pahār. If you get enough to eat you can push a mountain aside.—Muria proverb

883 In addition to work in the fields, chelik and motiari are kept busy all day long, in and around their homes. The motiari must fetch water from the well or stream, collect leaves from the jungle for leaf-cups and plates, nurse the babies, clean and cow-dung the buildings, husk rice and grain, help in the cooking, feed goats, pigs and cattle. The boys must fetch firewood from the forest, make string from hemp and bark, prepare the ploughs and carts, keep the buildings in repair, and look after the cattle and other animals.

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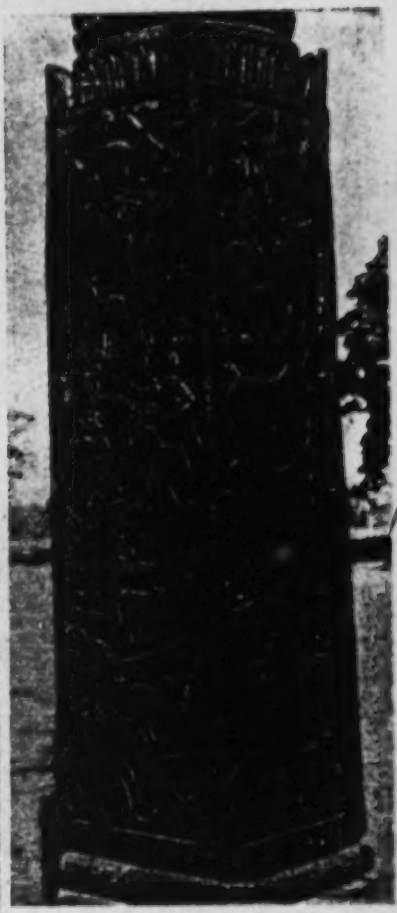
Detail of Machaki Hunga's pillar at Dilmilli



Newly-erected pillar near Chitrakot

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Apparatus for distilling mahua spirit

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Detail of memorial pillar of Kopa Dhorua at Massenar, showing people serving rice-beer

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Woman making rice-beer

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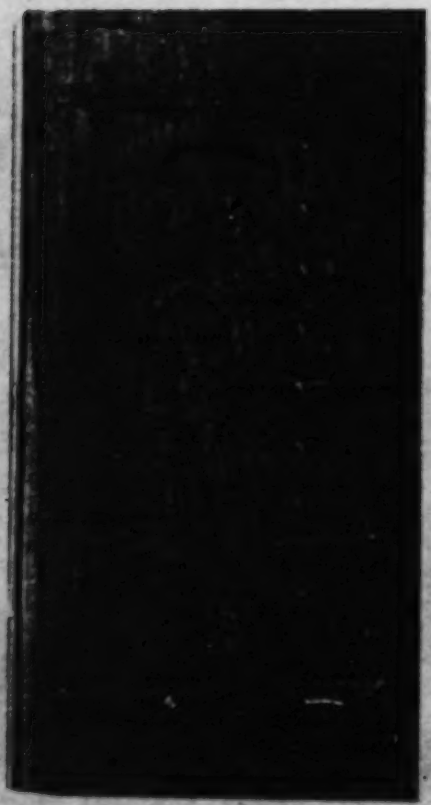
A murderer's memorial. Wooden pillar in memory of Oyami Marvi Masa at Jabeli

Detail of Marvi Masa's memorial pillar, showing him as a Siraha sitting on his swing



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